



Burger King operator in China fined over old ingredients

BEIJING (AP) — The operator of six Burger King outlets in southern China that used expired ingredients has been required to pay more than \$400,000 in a case publicized by state TV, according to a regulator. One of the outlets in the city of Nanchang was criticized in July on an annual consumer protection program that in past years has focused on foreign auto, smartphone, and other brands. Burger King apologized at that time and promised to cooperate with the investigation of outlets operated by a franchisee. The restaurant operator was fined 916,504 yuan (\$132,600), the Nanchang Market Supervision Bureau announced. The bureau also confiscated “illegal income,” raising the total to 2.8 million yuan (\$407,000). Food safety is especially sensitive in China following scandals over tainted, fake, or shoddy milk, drugs, and other products that injured or killed consumers.

Shuttered Philippine TV network ends newscasts

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — The Philippines’ largest TV network last month broadcast its final newscasts to millions of provincial viewers with announcers tearfully bidding goodbye after lawmakers voted to reject its license renewal. ABS-CBN Corp. said it was only able to distribute its news programs over cable in metropolitan Manila after August 28 as it scaled down operations following a vote by a House of Representatives committee to reject the renewal of its 25-year franchise. It was the largest closure of news programs in an Asian bastion of democracy in recent memory and involved laying off news anchors and cancelling programs that have gained widespread popularity in recent decades. Many announcers wept or fought back tears as they thanked their viewers. International media groups have condemned the shutdown of ABS-CBN, which was founded in 1953, as a major blow to media freedom. Watchdogs have accused President Rodrigo Duterte and his government of muzzling independent media such as ABS-CBN that have reported critically on issues such as his anti-drug crackdown that has left thousands of mostly poor drug suspects dead. Duterte earlier threatened to block the network’s franchise renewal but his spokesman said the president did not influence the lawmakers’ votes.

PGA Tour event in Japan relocated to California

(AP) — The Zozo Championship is moving from Japan to California this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, making it the anchor of a west coast swing in the fall portion of the schedule that is certain to attract strong fields. The \$8 million tournament will be played October 22 to 25 at Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks, California, with Tiger Woods as the defending champion on a course where he has won five times. The tour and Zozo Inc. announced the decision this month. It will be called the Zozo Championship at Sherwood, a similar title to the South Korean event moving to Las Vegas the week before. That one will be called the CJ Cup at Shadow Creek. Both tournaments will return to Asia next fall. The temporary rearrangement was a big coup for the tour, especially since Zozo and CJ Group primarily do business in Japan and South Korea, respectively. Along with concerns about the coronavirus, players were reluctant to go to Asia this fall with the Masters having moved to November 12 to 15.

China extends anti-dumping tariffs on Indian optical fiber

BEIJING (AP) — China’s Commerce Ministry says it has extended punitive tariffs on Indian optical fiber products for five years. The announcement follows a yearlong review after a previous tariff expired in 2019. It took effect August 14. It is unclear if the move is in any way related to a recent bout of antagonisms between the Asian giants linked to a border clash in which 20 Indian soldiers died. The tariffs on single-mode optical fiber range from 7.4% to 30.6% and were first imposed in August 2014. Optical fiber is used in telecommunications networks. In August, India kept in place tariffs on China-made solar power products that were imposed to protect its own manufacturers.

HK begins mass testing for virus amid public doubts

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong tested more than 120,000 people for the coronavirus at the start of a mass-testing effort that’s become another political flash point in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory. Volunteers stood in lines at some of the more than 100 testing centers, though many residents are distrustful of the resources and staff being provided by China’s central government and some have expressed fear DNA could be collected. The Hong Kong government has dismissed such concerns, and leader Carrie Lam urged the public to see the program in a fair and objective light and appealed to critics to stop discouraging people from being tested since participation is crucial to the program’s success. “This large-scale universal community testing program is beneficial to fighting the epidemic and beneficial to our society. It will also help Hong Kong come out of the pandemic unscathed and is conducive to the resumption of daily activities,” Lam said at her weekly news conference. More than 650,000 people in the city of 7.5 million signed up in advance for the program, which will last at least a week. It is aimed at identifying silent carriers of the virus — those without symptoms — who could be spreading the disease. The government expects 5 million people will take part in the program, which could be extended to two weeks depending on demand. Hong Kong’s worst outbreak in early July was blamed in part on an exemption from quarantine requirements for airline staff, truck drivers from mainland China, and sailors on cargo ships. At its peak, Hong Kong recorded more than 100 locally transmitted cases per day, after going weeks without any in June.



SACRED & SOILED. Funeral pyres burn at Manikarnika Ghat, one of the oldest and most sacred places for Hindus to be cremated, on the banks of the Ganges River in Varanasi, India, in this file photo. For millions of Hindus, Varanasi is a place of pilgrimage and anyone who dies in the city or is cremated on its ghats is believed to attain salvation and freed from the cycle of birth and death. Tens of thousands of corpses are cremated in the city each year, leaving half-burnt flesh, dead bodies, and ash floating in the Ganges. (AP Photo/Altat Qadri, File)

Ganges River flows with history and prophecy for India

By Altat Qadri
The Associated Press

A LONG THE GANGES, India — More than 2,000 years ago, a powerful king built a fort on the banks of India’s holiest river, on the fringes of what is now a vast industrial city.

Today, little of the ancient construction remains, except for mounds of rubble that tannery workers pick through for bricks to build shanties atop what was once the fortress of the great King Yayati.

And Kanpur, where Yayati built his fort, is a city known for its leather tanneries and the relentless pollution they pump into the Ganges River.

For more than 1,700 miles, from the Gangotri Glacier in the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal, the Ganges flows across the plains like a timeline of India’s past, nourishing an extraordinary wealth of life. It has seen empires rise and fall. It has seen too many wars, countless kings, British colonials, independence, and the rise of Hindu nationalism as a political movement.

In India, the Ganges is far more than just a river. It is religion, industry, farming, and politics. It is a source of water for millions of people, and an immense septic system that endures millions of gallons of raw sewage.

To Hindus, the Ganges is “Ganga Ma” — Mother Ganges — and a center of spiritual life for more than a billion people. Every year, millions of Hindus make pilgrimages to the temples and shrines along its shores. To drink from it is auspicious. For many Hindus, life is incomplete without bathing in it at least once in their lifetime, to wash away their sins.

But all is not well with the Ganges.

Pollution has left large sections of it dangerous to drink. Criminal gangs illegally mine sand from its banks to feed India’s relentless appetite for concrete. Hydroelectric dams along the river’s tributaries, needed to power India’s growing economy, have infuriated some Hindus, who say the sanctity of the river has been compromised.

And over the past 40-some years, the Gangotri Glacier — source of almost half the Ganges’ water — has been receding at an increasingly frightening pace, now losing about 22 yards per year.

For millennia, the Gangotri’s glacial melt water has ensured the arid plains get enough water, even during the driest months. The rest comes from Himalayan tributaries that flow from the colossal chain of mountains.

As the Ganges flows across the plains, its once clean and mineral-rich water begins collecting the toxic waste from the millions of people who depend on it, becoming one of the most polluted rivers in the world. Millions of gallons of sewage, along with heavy metals, agricultural pesticides, human bodies, and animal carcasses, are dumped into the Ganges every day.

At times, officials try to fix things but vast stretches of it remain dangerously unhealthy.

Still, to Hindus, the river remains religiously pure.

Every year, tens of thousands of Hindus bring the bodies of their loved ones to be cremated at the Ganges, in the city of Varanasi. A Hindu who dies in the city, or is cremated alongside it, is also freed from that cycle of birth and death.

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Asian Currency Exchange Rates

Units per U.S. dollar as of 9/04

Bangladesh Taka	84.63
Cambodian Riel	4105.5
China Renminbi	6.8409
Fijian Dollar	2.0764
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7502
Indian Rupee	73.289
Indonesian Rupiah	14710
Iranian Rial	42025
Japanese Yen	106.33
Laos New Kip	9110.3
Malaysian Ringgit	4.147
Nepal Rupee	117.75
Pakistani Rupee	165.4
Papua N.G. Kina	3.4414
Philippine Peso	48.58
Russian Ruble	75.338
Saudi Riyal	3.7504
Singapore Dollar	1.3668
South Korean Won	1190.7
Sri Lankan Rupee	185.04
Taiwan Dollar	29.319
Thai Baht	31.41
Vietnam Dong	23210